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James Iredell (1751-1799) of Edenton was the first of two North Carolinians to serve on the U.S. Supreme Court. The third volume of his papers provides a comprehensive view of his life in the years immediately preceding his appointment to the high court.

After the Revolutionary War, Iredell faced financial problems and, consequently, eschewed public office to concentrate on his legal practice. As a prominent attorney, he worked and corresponded with the state's most eminent leaders, including his brother-in-law Samuel Johnston, William Hooper, William R. Davie, Richard Dobbs Spaight, and Hugh Williamson. Iredell represented clients in county and superior courts, as well as providing out-of-court services, such as drafting wills and contracts. As a result, his papers reflect the concerns and conflicts of a society moving from war and dependence to peace and self-reliance.

Though Iredell is best known as a jurist, the prominence he gained during the 1780s owed more to his skills as a writer and orator. He wrote persuasively in support of judicial review and the ratification of the Constitution. His widely read "Answers to Mr. Mason's Objections to the New Constitution," which is included here, and remarks from the published 1788 state ratification convention debates brought Iredell national attention.

The documents in this volume trace James Iredell's transformation from a young lawyer with a modest statewide reputation to a mature, nationally known statesman on the verge of reaching the pinnacle of his profession.